

DeWitt-Macon-Piatt Extension Council Meeting
November 9, 2020

The Unit 17 Extension Council Meeting was held via Zoom due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The meeting was called to order by President Nancy Derby at 6:37 P.M. All new members were welcomed and each attendee introduced themselves and gave the county they were representing.

The minutes of the September board meetings have been sent to each person in attendance. President Nancy asked for any corrections, none were given. A motion to approve the September minutes was made by Janell Baum Thomas, and seconded by Dave White. Minutes were approved as presented.

Members present : Jo Bauer, Janell Baum Thomas, Stephanie Block, Nancy Derby, Kathi Drozs, April Gum, Zach Howell, Dale Lattz, Trinity Mata, Tayisha Nelson, Kristi Pyatt, Katie Sellmeyer, Ben Suckow, Jennifer Suckow, and David White.

Staff present were Jamie Boas, Staci Coussens, Doug Gucker, Doug Harlan, Trinity Johnson, Caitlin Mellendorf and Sarah Vogel.

President Nancy asked that Doug Harlan continue the agenda. Doug asked for any public comments or questions and none were presented. He then gave the Fiscal report. We have over 3 million in the Unit's Trust Account. He stated that this will soon change as bills come in and personnel are hired and paid. Approximately 14% of the budget is currently spent. Doug said that the low amount of expenses is a result of COVID-19 reducing travel and other program expenses. Doug provided the Council with a personnel update. He stated that the Unit's Consumer Economics Educator has been advertised again. This

position opening will close on December 10th. An offer was made for the Unit's open Marketing EPC position. SNAP-Ed filled its last Community Worker position. Kellie Marlow joined the staff on November 2nd. The Macon County Office Support Assistant closed October 28th. There were 24 applicants for the position. Testing will be done on campus. Doug said that he hoped to have this position filled by the middle of December. He also said that filling open personnel position during the pandemic has proven to be a bit difficult.

Doug asked the Council to identify underserved populations in the Unit in order that educational programming could be directed to the population. Such groups as single parents, minorities, low social-economic groups and senior shut-ins were all identified. Nancy Derby asked about possible programs for Hispanics and other migrant workers. Doug stated that DeWitt County did have a migrant worker population and that some programming had been done with summer nutrition programs. Jo Bauer asked about program access for seniors without computer or internet access. The Council recommended sending program flyers directly to homes of seniors and establishing lists to identify needs of these groups and individuals.

Doug asked the Council member to identify any other programming needs. None were identified.

The program highlight was provided by Sarah Vogel the Unit's new Horticulture Educator. She provided information regarding this year's Master Gardener Awards. Several the Unit's Master Gardener has won statewide awards. Sarah also reported on a very successful tree ID walk/program in Decatur. She reported that the Master Gardener help desk was still very busy despite the pandemic.

County Director Doug Harlan updated the Council on changes in Unit operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He stated that all three

Unit offices are once again closed to the public and all staff are working remotely.

The small farms and local foods educator report was given by Doug Gucker. He reported that his office has been busy with master naturalist classes with two new volunteers being added to the ranks. Master Naturalist fall field trips included Scovill Zoo, a birding group trip and an outing to Friends Creek Conservation Area. He also shared numerous additional activities that are taking place or have been completed, making his position especially busy.

Trinity Johnson reported on activities in Macon County 4-H Youth Development. She has several events going on as well. A virtual cooking competition is being held, creative writing for 8 to 18 yr. olds , as well as physical fitness programs.

The DeWitt Piatt 4-H Youth Development report was given by Jamie Boas. This 4H program is participating in adopting an IL stream through the Riverwatch partnership. She also reported on a survey sent to DeWitt and Piatt County 4H families to assess the interest children and parents regarding programs they would like to see offered. Jamie present the Council with a summary report of the survey.

The Nutrition and Wellness program was covered by Caitlin Mellendorf. She said that the NEAFCS National 2020 conference was held virtually due to the pandemic. Caitlin attended the conference and highlighted a pre-conference session on freeze drying. She stated that her October programs focused providing skills to families that had picky eaters. She also offered programming for preparing quick and easy evening meals and breaking less healthy generational eating habits.

Finally, from SNAP-Ed, Staci Coussens gave an update on trying to work with the various food pantries. She is working with them to create an

appointment system that will limit the number of people inside the pantry at one time due to COVID. She covered each of the Eastern IL Food Bank Grant locations and responses to her suggestions. She reported that The Salvation Army in Decatur has a new pantry manager. Finally, Staci report that her work with Decatur Memorial Hospital program is on pause due to the pandemic.

President Nancy asked for a motion to adjourn. Motion made by Katie Sellmeyer and second by Stephanie Block. Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Next meeting will be March 8th, 2021 at 6:30 pm. Doug stated that he planned to have an in person meeting in the DeWitt County office. If pandemic restrictions will not permit an in person meeting, the Council meeting will be held via zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo Ann Bauer